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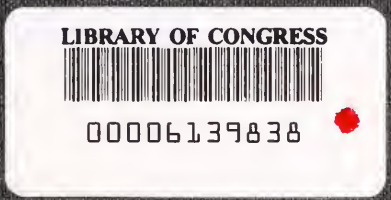

# Memorial Sermon

DELIVERED BY

# REV. JOHN W. SAYERS,

CHAPLAIN

## DEPARTMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA.

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☞The Department Commander requests that this sermon be read at a regular or special meeting of the Post.

J. F. MORRISON, A. A. G.

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# SERMON.

BY faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witnesses that he was righteous! God testifying of his gifts and by it he being dead yet speaketh. Heb. XL: 4.

Human life is of short duration. Of all our years but few may be devoted to the accomplishment of great purposes. The years of helpless infancy, those required for education and training and those occupied by the weakness of age, even if we outlive our alloted three score and ten, do not leave many for the active and aggressive work which brings to us a name that will not be forgotten after we are gone. Hence few men, of all the earth's millions ever do much that is remembered after them. It is, therefore, not so much what men may accomplish in this life as it is what their work may do for the world after they are dead. "Art is long and life is short," is an old proverb. Art lives long after life has passed away. The living man talks to his day and generation and the living hear him. The dead man if he talks at all, does so to the ages which succeed him and it matters not whether his life was eminently good or notoriously wicked, he still talks.

"The evil that men do lives after them:
The good is oft interred with their bones:"

This, however, does not express a whole truth for the

good lives always to a noble purpose and keeps the world slowly moving toward the right.

Abel was the second son of Adam, and the fourth human being of whom the oldest history gives us any account. However righteous he may have been, he could, while living, have had but few auditors to whom he could impart his knowledge or influence by his example.

What his life was to do for the world, was to be done in after ages, when men should require great lessons and the race should need teaching by example. The writers of the Holy Scriptures were not inspired for their day and generation alone, but for all time.

Through the ages they have been speaking and will continue to speak through an influence that has widened, as education has broadened the lives of people. Solomon speaks wisdom to-day as much as when he wrote the proverbs which have been golden grain in the fields of every generation since his time. Paul speaks to this generation upon doctrinal points, as authoritively as when he wrote the wonderful epistles which have become the text books of Christian teaching. They being dead yet speak. Christ's word and promises uttered nineteen hundred years ago, still bring comfort and strength to the believer's heart as though his words of love and encouragement were audibly whispered in their ears. These truths bring us to the reflection that

"It is not all of life to live,
Nor all of death to die."

Life would be to us a solemn fact even if we knew that it ended absolutely with the death of the body. But when

we realize that we are to live on and speak and teach through the ages, either for good or ill, according to what we have done, then the judgement after death, should become to us a tremendous incentive to duty before God, in order that our sacrifice may be acceptable to Him.

There are two sorts of sacrifice mentioned in the text, one of them more excellant than the other. The one was of the firstlings of the flock and the fat thereof, offered in faith and love and self devotion. The other of the quickly perishing fruits of the ground, of little value indifferently tendered, without gratitude to the giver of all good and from hands that were unclean and a heart that was perverse and wicked. The one was a sacrifice of atonement for sin, a pious expression of humility and unworthiness and a supplication for Divine favor ; while the other was a formal and heartless offering of mere acknowledgement accompanied by a haughty spirit and an indifferent manner which did not commend the act to God's favor.

From the time that sin entered the world and death by sin, the two powers of good and evil have been at constant warfare, striving against each other and contending for the supremacy. In the old Persian religion it was the light against the darkness—Ormuzd, the principle of purity and goodness, against Ahriman the principal of impurity and evil. In our theology it is Satan against God. Between these inharmonious elements humanity has had a long and weary march and a sad struggle through all the centuries. The very civilization under which we live has been secured only by hard fighting. It has been built up through ages

of torture, suffering and discomforts. The foundations of human government have been laid in ruin and blood, while the religion which we enjoy has had its logic worked out in the darkness and solitude of the dungeon, and its faith purified by the fires of martyrdom. Our spiritual strength has been increased to us through the agonies of the cross while our hopes have been assured to us and brightened through the triumphs by which through God, we have overcome the assaults of the adversary and the persecutions of the world. "In the world," said Christ, "ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The only sacrifice God requires of us to-day is that of the lowly and contrite heart.

The text presents to us many important topics for thought. We gather here and there from the Bible many abstract declarations each of which men sometimes accept as the essence of Christian duty. Many of these things, possibly all of them are pleasing to God; but taken separately they are far from establishing the acceptability of our offering to God. Goodness is a quality in our nature that God approves; but mere passive goodness will not save the soul nor win the world to Christ. Hope is an attribute divinely inspired within us; but it will not save us if it becomes the only element in our religious life. Thousands of men wilfully sin against God's law and yet vainly hope for his mercy. Charity is a most valuable quality in man and one that has the highest commendation of the Master; but in a worldly sense, we may exercise charity to the utmost of our means and opportunities and still miss heaven at last,

Faith is another essential to the make-up of the perfect man, but taken alone it is but one step up the ladder that leads towards God. For faith, said the Apostle James, "if it has not works is dead, being alone." And works, which embrace so much in their comprehensive meaning, which of themselves so nearly make the perfect man, only justify and do not save us. We must add to our works obedience and faith to make our offering pleasing and acceptable to God. Abraham, in obedience to the Divine command, carried the child of his love to the altar. The sacrifice was complete in the act, even without the shedding of blood or the kindling of the fire. Faith in the Divine wisdom which issued the decree and ready obedience to comply with the command, completed the trial of his faith and it was imputed to him for righteousness.

It is important therefore, in the sacrifices we are called upon to make, that we shall have a witness to our righteousness—important that, that which speaks for us when we have gone hence, shall have the approval of God.

The great anchor to Christian faith is the immortality of the soul. Are we to live to all eternity in another world after this life is over? It would be a dreadful thought to contemplate, as a truth, that this life forever ended our mission. That the soul which dwells within this body shall perish and be no more. That this wondrous spirit of ours that thinks and plans and acts, that loves and hopes and worships, shall die and vanish like an extinguished flame. That death shall forever separate us from all these scenes of loveliness, from all these associations of friend-

ship and affection, from all this intercourse through which we contrive and plan for the interest and happiness of others. That we shall look into each others faces no more nor recall the many joys which have lighted up our lives and made us thankful to God for our existence.

"Alas for love if that were all,
And nought beyond, O earth."

We do not entertain the thought; we dismiss it because we do not believe it. God's word of revelation says that it is not true. Our yearning natures look into the beyond and accept the verity of holy writ. But does death draw a line of absolute separation between this world and the next? The living cannot cross the boundry as Enoch and Elijah did without going through the dark valley. But may not the disembodied spirits come back to us? Even though their presence be invisible may they not be round and about us and though dead, speak to our spirits? Angels came to Lot at Sodom. They appeared in the Heavens and sang the song of "Peace on earth;" over the plains of Bethlehem. They ministered to Christ in his temptation. They rolled the stone from His sepulchre and announced His resurrection to the weeping women. We are assured that God sends His ministering angels to earth upon errands of mercy and love. Surely then our dead are not lost to us. They do return to us, they communicate with our spirits and minister to our needs. How fondly we think of our dead. How lovingly we cherish their memories. How we long for the old affection and companionship, How we sigh for

The touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

And yet not feel the one nor hear the other; but somehow, being dead they do speak: and oh the influence of the thoughts of these departed loved ones upon our conduct and lives. We call them tenderly and lovingly into our reveries and musings. We summon them to our side in our hours of loneliness and solitude, we communicate with them in the night watches and cherish them in our affections and thoughts.

If we are to speak after death as the characters described in the text are speaking, it becomes of the highest importance that we shall live right lives and do righteous deeds, that our teachings may be pure and our example be beyond reproach. Think of all eternity through which we shall look back upon the influence we have left behind us whether for good or ill. Think of Herod the Great, clothed with kingly power but with hands recking with the blood of his murdered household, until Augustus said of him that he would rather be Herod's swine than his son. Think of his murder of the innocents that among them he might destroy the infant Saviour.

Think of all his dreadful crimes, which have brought to his memory the execrations of the ages and then turn to the babe of Bethlehem, whose after life was a series of sorrows and persecutions but who went about doing good, leaving at last to the world the grand legacy of the Cross upon which he suffered death. What a lesson for us to contemplate to-day.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes,—they
Were souls that stood alone,
While the men they agonized for hurled
The contumelious stone,
Stood serene, and down the future saw the
Golden beam incline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by
Their faith divine.
By one man's plain truth to manhood and
To God's supreme design.

What therefore shall be the nature of our sacrifice? It may be a hard thing to hold ourselves aloof from sin when it presents itself in some alluring and attractive form. It may be difficult to overcome the envy and selfishness of our own hearts and to satisfy ourselves that we are our brothers' keepers, when the advantages of preferment and gain are in our favor. It may be a hard struggle to overcome our natural tendencies to self indulgence and ignoble ease. In fact our disinclination to submit to wholesome restraints may make duty an irksome path for us to pursue. But God demands the sacrifice of our entire lives to his service. Through the text the same choice is offered to us, that Joshua offered to the tribes in his last interview with them. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," whether the God of your fathers or the false Gods of the people in whose land ye dwell. Ours must be an acceptable sacrifice.

It is certain that we cannot serve two masters; if we love sin we cannot be obedient to God; if we serve Mammon we cannot honor Christ. The Master gave us a safe rule for our faith when he declared the first and great commandment to be, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and that the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

To offer any sacrifice we must come before God with clean hands and pure hearts. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," said the wise man. Cain's offering was not acceptable because of his sin, nor will ours be if it is not offered in the sincerity of our lives and purpose.

Nations like individuals are moral personages and are alike responsible to God for their conduct. If they would secure the commendation of the great Master their sacrifices before Him must be acceptable and pleasing to Him. It is the righteous offering only that obtains the witness. Where are all the mighty nations of the past which sacrificed so much of human life to satisfy their ambition? Where are the mighty conquerors whose terrible armies shook the earth with their tread? Where are all the governments whose foundations have been built upon the ruins of others which they had destroyed? Their own fall and ruin speaks through the pages of history the voice of warning against oppression and sin and utter the solemn prophecy that, before the God of nations, no sacrifice can ever obtain the witness unless it be righteous and acceptable to him." Look at the pyramids, and the ruined temples and tombs of Egypt reared by the blood-sweat of starved and oppressed millions. Look at the great mounds among the Euphrates and the Tigris, the sad remains of splendid architecture which time has mercifully concealed under her shifting sands.

Look at the magnificent ruins of Greece and Rome—fragments still remaining of temple and altar, reared to the worship of the false; sculptured column and architrave,

statues of marble and pedestal of granite, all broken and fallen under a destructive policy more debasing and false than the worship which dragged them down. Being dead they speak, but in minor tones of sadness which cast a deep gloom over the memory of their greatness.

We need not enumerate the nationalities, but from Egypt down to the last government that has fallen all, without exception, bear upon their foreheads the mark of Cain. They have been the oppressors and slayers of their people and the hand of vengeance, which they raised against others, has not been stayed by others against them. They being dead speak to the nations of to-day more forcibly than the living nations can speak.

We see from these facts that the book of the past is open to the people of this country. The lessons of beginning, growth and developement are upon its pages for our profit. The lessons of rise and fall are there for our warning. The lesson of success and eminent attainment, under conditions which made the offering acceptable before God, are written there for our encouragement. The lessons of decline under circumstances through which cupidity and ambition have filled the cup of antiquity to the brim and made the sacrifice a heartless mockery, are also there, bidding us beware of the sins which resulted in hopeless ruin. Surely we have had examples and lessons enough to teach us that we cannot discard virtue, forget God and expect through sin to prosper. If we leave the ancient landmarks we will lose our way and will never reach the high destiny that has formed the ideal of our just ambition. If we are not a

God-fearing and truth-loving people; if we forget our traditions and turn our backs upon Divine revelation, we will become as chaff before the wind and our much loved institutions will perish.

Let us look for a moment at our traditions. We were a land of promise, held in reserve while the great experiment of social life was being worked out in the Old World. The time came when the developing energies of the Old Nationalities must have new fields for their enterprise. They were held in bondage by old customs and fallicies regarding social life. False notions of trade and of government were impediments to advancement and false religions were standing in the way of gospel truth and gospel liberty.

Columbus was raised up by Providence as a pioneer into new fields. He sailed to the West full of religious zeal and enthusiasm, searching for the shores of an old land but found a new world. He looked upon the approaching shore from the deck of his vessel with glad surprise.

He had discovered a new country of inviting climate and balmy air; a very paradise to look upon. His first impulse was to give the glory to God. His first act in landing upon the shore was the worship of Almighty God and a dedication of the land to Him in the name of the Sovereigns of Spain. He came back to the field of his discovery believing that, as a part of his mission he was to convert the heathen of the new land to the Christian faith. He was mistaken in his calling. The fruits he brought to the sacrifice were of the earth earthy and his offering was not accepted.

One hundred and twenty years later amid the storms of winter a little tempest-tossed vessel anchored in a sheltering bay far up the coast. The scene shoreward was the opposite to that upon which Columbus had looked. The winter was severe, the cold was intense, the forests were dark and forbidding, the inhabitants were hostile and savage. There was nothing inviting or inspiring in the landscape. But the land before them was to be their home. It was a courageous company that had come for freedom's sake. That little ship, the Mayflower, was destined for a memorable place in history. Within its cabin this Republic had its origin in the compact that was signed by brave and religious men, declaring their faith in God and the right of men to worship Him according to the dictates of conscience, a compact sealed with tears of faith and made holy by prayer.

The foundation of our system which vouchsafes freedom to men and which proclaims liberty to the world was there laid in religious truth and for God's glory. That offering was the more excellent sacrifice and God approved it.

Religious freedom was henceforth to be the watchword throughout our land and the principle upon which a new nation was to be built.

Under its influence social life was to develop. Men were to be made better and the race was to be lifted higher in the scale of being. Human life upon this continent was to experience a grand developement—an evolution toward a more exalted sphere of manhood and true living.

The last Sabbath of that voyage was spent upon the vessel in holy worship. Earnest, fervent prayers were offered. Hymns of praise were sung and covenants with God were renewed.

"Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea,
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang,
To the Anthems of the free."

The Pilgrims are dead. The Mayflower's little company all sleep along the shores of their New World home. But the songs which awakened the echo upon that wintry Sabbath morning are still floating through the forests and over the hills and plains of our land in unison with the song of peace and good will to men. They being dead yet speak. The music of that grand chorus rings in our ears to-day! And down in the future when the singers are forgotten, it will still have its influence as an educating power among the masses.

The landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock in 1620, and upon that solid foundation, dedicating themselves and the land of their adoption to God, was a land-mark from which we cannot depart without danger.

Religious freedom having been secured the desire for political emancipation followed as a consequence. A spirit of independence and self reliance, engendered by the situation, fostered by the times and intensified by the circumstances, passed as an inheritance to the generations which preceded the Revolution. During these years of probation the problem of self-government was gradually working itself out to a successful solution in the minds and hearts of

the people. When the rupture with Great Britain came the country was not unprerepared for the issue. The same trust in God which gave inspiration to the Pilgrims at Plymouth, gave wisdom and determination to the Continental Congress and gave courage and hope to the Continental Army. A praying general led the American forces. A devout spirit pervaded the National Legislature and gave dignity and force to its deliberations. The framers of the Declaration expressed their reliance upon Divine Providence for the support of their principles. It was again the more excellent sacrifices by which the young Nation obtained the witness and secured success for our arms. This was God's country from the beginning; and upon this soil if we are faithful to our trust will be demonstrated the great emancipation that some day shall usher in the millenium.

The dead past may bury its dead issues, but living men, imbued with the spirit of patriotism, will press on to greater heights and nobler achievements, while the dead who have fallen in the cause of man will march shoulder to shoulder with those who are foremost in the fight. The dead of the Revolution still speak for freedom and for God. Peace was established and the government was reconstructed. The thoughts of men fell into harmony with the genius of our institutions while the country assumed a high place among the nations of the earth.

Still something was wanting to make our offering complete and to render our sacrifice acceptable to God. Liberty had but half a meaning. All were not free upon our soil. The bondman had come down to us as

an inheritance and he was still in chains. The Declaration was not for him while the Constitution was only for his master. Slavery was an institution of other days, before the spirit of the Declaration had become an element in the domestic life of the people. Unfortunately it survived both the Declaration and the Constitution. Under the genial warmth of a southern sun it flourished and grew into alarming proportions. It became the cherished institution of the South-land and began slowly to coil itself like a deadly serpent for a spring at the life of the Union. "The South has never been wronged by the North," said Governor Pickens of South Carolina. "Our claim of grievance is but a pretence. We cannot live together. Our institutions are at variance. If slavery must continue to us, we must dissolve the Union of the States." The North had long before realized the danger and sought to avert it by moral forces and esthetic teachings. The policy was too mild to be effective. The fetters of the black man were too strongly riveted to be broken or severed by anything but the blows of the hammer and the fires of the furnace. The wrong was deep-seated and obstinate. It was a crime against justice and liberty which civilization could only expiate by blood. The trouble culminated in 1861 when the country was startled by the booming of hostle cannon in Charleston harbor.

The nation was now called to account for its sins—sins of commission upon the part of the South—sins of omission upon the part of the North. It was the voice of our brothers' blood calling to Heaven for redress. It was in

vain that we pleaded that we were not our brothers keeper —that we had no Constitutional right to interfere with the rights of the South. Our clear duty had always been to proclaim liberty throughout the land; but we stood and saw the portals of the temple closed against a proscribed and down-trodden race. The decree had gone forth that henceforth the doors must be open to all; and if not opened by the key of justice they must be forced by the sword.

The storm had broken upon us. The cloud came from the South and not from the North. The North had never been aggressive except by speech and pen. It was now compelled to take up arms to defend its own life. It was not because the South had been wronged, but because the slaveholder believed that slavery and freedom stood in such antagonism to each other, that the two systems could not be administered upon the same soil and by the same law-making power, and that unless a separation could be forced slavery would have to go down before an advancing civilization.

It was then that the sacrifice offered by the North obtained the witness of the righteousness of its cause. The South came to the sacrifice offering upon its altar the unrequited toil of its enslaved millions. It brought the products of its servitude and offered the unholy fruits of secession. It lighted its fires with the coals of sectional hatred and from the blazing torch of war. The North came with the products of free labor and lighted its altar fires from the torch of liberty. It came with its offering of free education for all, with equal privileges under the law and with

that potential weapon of the free man, a free ballot. If Abel's sacrifice obtained the witness that was righteous, then the sacrifice of the North with the Proclamation of Emancipation of January, 1863, the grandest document of its kind in all history, and the greatest triumph of modern civilization, was such an act of supreme righteousness as to give the North the witness of all the ages that shall hereafter come and go. Being dead, the generation which achieved such important results shall speak on as long as suns shall rise and set.

In that memorable struggle were born new impulses and holier ambitions in the hearts of the American people. The sacrifice was one of much blood. The death angel passed through the land and into nearly every household and smote, not only the first born, but in many cases whole families of brave boys. Before me are men who know the truth of these utterances. Thirty years tell that they lived through the time when marshall music filled the air and armed battallions marched through our streets and into the field, in defence of the land they loved and the institutions they were determined to preserve undefiled.

They were imbued with the spirit of the martyred Lincoln when he said, "Without contemplating consequences, before high Heaven and in the face of the world, I swear eternal fidelity to the just cause as I deem it, of the land of my life, my liberty and my love." They were honorable wounds which tell of their participation in the great strife. They offered their lives without reserve and placed their all upon the altar of the country. Christ

said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend's."

You offered yours and by your side in the strife many a brave comrade fell and found his grave upon the battle-field. Greater love hath no man shown for his country than this. None with greater loyalty have ever given their lives for their fellow men.

From their graves, being dead, they speak us to-day. They speak to us through the history of their deeds and daring. They speak to us through the loving memories which the living have cherished for their patriotism. They speak to us through the Grand Army of the Republic, which after the war brought the veterans of the land and sea into closer comradeship and preserved among their Archives the traditions of the camp-fire and the march, of the bivouac and the fight. You my comrades, even with silent tongues, are speaking eloquently to the country in your daily lives and in the abiding loyalty, that as veterans and survivors of the war you inspire in the souls of the present generation of young men.

Your sacrifice has been offered in your own bodies and in the firstlings of your flocks. It has been acceptable to God and your country has imputed it to you for righteousness. You are resting now from the fatigues and dangers of the campaign; but while you rest you are reaching forward to new conquests, you are moving forward a conquering army in the departments of peace.

The Grand Army speaks to the people not only through the influence of its organization of living members, but

through its dead who fought under the banners of the great Armies of the North but did not survive the war. What a mighty voice speaks from our National Cemeteries and from the lone grave, of the dead soldier, by the wayside. What potent influences are going up from the many fields that the war drenched with human blood. Silently the grass may grow over these fields and plentifully the grain may yield its wealth to the garner, while the glad husbandman sings his harvest home; but the memory of what was done there will never fade. Though centuries of peace may roll over these fields they will not be forgottten, for to all time, they will be hallowed spots where for every drop of blood that ebbed from the faithful soldier's heart, there will spring up a new germ, in some living heart, as a safeguard to Republican institutions. Our boys, who read the history of their heroism and who may some day tread with pilgrim feet over these memorable spots, as they recall the sacrifice, will drink in fresh inspirations of patriotism and will receive new courage to emulate their example in defence of country, flag and home. These dead heroes as well as the living comrades, speak to us to-day, not of strife but of harmony, not of war but of peace.

It is true that the signs of the times point to many a hard contest in the early coming days; but they will be the battles of mind grappling with the great problems that the rapidly changing panorama of our National growth are continually forcing upon our attention. They are not to be decided by the sword upon new fields of

blood, but within the legislative arena, where stronger and abler men must be sent, fully endowed with cultivation, ability and sound judgment to oppose mind to mind, reason against fallacy and moral courage in opposition to political chicanery.

The signs of the times also point to the significant fact that sometime in the future, and probably not so far off as it now seems, "Nation shall not lift up the sword against Nation, neither shall they learn war any more." This is one of the glorious fruits that the Grand Army of the Republic has brought for its offering. Fresh from the field where the sword had steeped itself to the hilt in blood, and where human glory, if such there be in war, had drained the cup to intoxication, a victorious army quietly grounded its arms and taking up the pursuits of domestic life, turned its weapons into ploughshares and pruning hooks and prepared the once field of death, for a gracious harvest of the fruits of peace.

Soon the last comrade of the Grand Army must fall; but the organization will live on in the work it has done; and the dead soldier will speak to the future as he speaks to-day breathing new life into the generations of young men as they shall march to the front in the management of the great political interests of the country. In the war the comrades that compose the Grand Army fought the battles for our Union. Since peace was declared under their fraternal organization they have fought the battles

of the coming centuries by demonstrating that pacific organization and good citizenship can not only repair the ravages of war but can build up a Nation upon a more solid and enduring basis than upon warships and arsenals. Yours has been the more acceptable offering; and from your altar fires sweet incense arises to heaven. The gleams of its flames are your camp-fires and are the beacon-lights of emancipation and liberty to all the world. When the last prayer shall be said over the last dead comrade and the last requiem shall be sung over his grave, he will still speak to the living both of the past and the future. His voice will be heard in the loyalty of his children and in their devotion to the old flag. It will be heard in the better and ever improving free education to the masses and in the more exalted National virtue which springs from the performance of noble deeds and in the living of good lives.

To-day the Nation weeps over its dead and strews flowers upon their graves. But the air is full of song and the household is full of rejoicing in remembrance of the blessings, which, through their lives, an honorable peace has brought to our doors. Long may the flag that they so nobly defended wave over this favored country! Long may the Nation's children gather under its folds and fling its colors into the untainted atmosphere of American loyalty. Long may the people shout and rejoice as its every star becomes a star of promise and its bright stripes, radiant with beauty, shall symbolize the the sunrise of universal peace. Comrades of the Grand Army your mis-

sion upon earth has been replete with grand results. May your reward in heaven be as great as your services have been here.

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